

Social Change in Melanesia: Development and History, by Paul Sillitoe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. ISBN cloth, 0-521-77141-2; paper, 0-521-77806-9; xx + 264 pages, maps, figures, bibliography, photographs, index. Cloth, US\$59.95; paper, US\$22.95.

Here is all the modernity that was absent in Paul Sillitoe's earlier monograph, *An Introduction to the Anthropology of Melanesia: Culture and Tradition* (1998). That one he dedicated "For friends in Melanesia, heirs to *ol pasin bilong tumbuna*"; this companion volume is "For Melanesian friends coming to terms with a rapidly changing world." Although "history" shares in the book's subtitle, Sillitoe mostly focuses on "development"—the economic and political transformations affecting Melanesia since the 1960s, or thereabouts.

Preachy book editors have put pen to paper warning of the pitfalls of turning doctoral dissertations into books. In this case, Sillitoe has written up "a series of university lectures"—a different literary transformation that also presents its problems, such as organization and integration of material. Sillitoe has drawn together one or more of his lectures into book chapters that treat a succession of issues. Each chapter "takes a topic common to many places throughout the region . . . and discusses it using one society in particular" (xix). After quick summaries of social change and of the colonial era, and a detour into Wola accounts of Jack Hides and Jim O'Malley's 1935 patrol through their neighborhood, Sillitoe moves along to tackle the effects of technology (eg,

steel tools) on local production and consumption, land tenure, big-man entrepreneurship, emerging economic inequalities, mining, logging, wage-migration, and urbanization, cargo cults, missionaries, state governance, and custom and identity.

Like a good survey course, the book introduces several approaches to Melanesian economic development, notably modernization and dependency theory. Lacking an explicit theoretical agenda, however, the book is more descriptive of development than it is analytical. Only brief mention is made of world systems theory, of today's globalization chatter, or of the perils of free trade and the International Monetary Fund. Sillitoe gives most attention to 1960s models of developmental stages and economic take-off, bringing back some out-of-print Walt Rostow and E K Fisk. (One can imagine that Sillitoe's lecture notes, judging by his guideposts and source materials, are today a bit yellowed and foxed.) Theory remains mainly in the background. The implication is that development, like history, just happens as the inevitable result of technological change and diffusion.

There is, sometimes, a disjunction between a university course's title and its content due, perhaps, to the particular interests and competencies of the lecturer. Like Sillitoe's earlier volume—titularly also about Melanesia—this companion book, too, mostly describes Papua New Guinea. The chapters' illustrative case studies include Wola, Siame, Tolai, Goroka, Bougainville, Vanimo, New Ireland, and West Sepik. Sillitoe does venture beyond Papua New Guinea when

discussing cargo cults (Tanna, Vanuatu) and custom movements (the Kwaio of Malaita), but apart from those there is only passing reference to the Melanesians of Irian Jaya, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Fiji.

The book's Papua New Guinea focus, on the plus side, offers readers a detailed portrayal of development and its problems in that country. On the minus side, when Sillitoe does look out at the rest of Melanesia he sometimes gets the details wrong. Indo-Fijians no longer outnumber indigenous Fijians (24). A fifth of Vanuatu's land, constitutionally at least, is no longer alienated (77). *Mekim Pepa* is not a Melanesian term for indentured labor contracts, except of course in Papua New Guinea (165). Tanna does not have a graded system of chiefly offices (184). Vanuatu's 1983 elections did not lead to independence (195—it was rather the 1979 polls). Tuberculosis seems likely to have preceded Europeans into the Pacific (213). Readers should note that the book, in the main, is about social change in Papua New Guinea and not Melanesia as a region. Luckily for Cambridge University Press, truth-in-labeling laws do not apply to books.

Sillitoe writes with therapeutic intent, here and there pointing out ways in which anthropology might help ameliorate some of the unfortunate social impacts of economic change. But he is modest, even pessimistic, about what anthropology can offer: "anthropologists can only advise on social problems and policies as they think those concerned perceive them, and here they run the risk of

indulging in social engineering—interfering in uncalled-for ways in other people's sociocultural arrangements. Anthropology is not an applied science; it cannot predict outcomes or solve problems" (8). Rather, anthropology offers information about local cultures that can improve development planning and government policy. "We cannot stop 'progress' any more than we can stop history; we can only help ameliorate its worst effects" (141). Anthropological information merely tempers the cutting edge of technological change.

Within these margins, students will find that Sillitoe's lectures-converted-into-book does offer a reasonable overview of economic and, to a lesser degree, political change in Papua New Guinea (and occasionally beyond). The perspective—thanks partly to those case studies—is the local: how is life changing in the village? The book can supplement other recent writing about class development, shifting gender relations, Melanesian Christianity, urban life, multinational corporations, and other transformations underway in contemporary Melanesia.

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